

HB: 5033 AN ACT ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF FOOD-INSECURE STUDENTS
AT PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION.

Representative Josh Elliot, Senator Derek Slap, and members of the Higher Ed committee:

Thank you for giving me the opportunity to testify regarding an issue that I am working hard to address. My name is Asija Qyteza and I am the Waterbury Associated Student Government President. I am writing this testimony to exhibit strong support for **HB 5033 AN ACT ADDRESSING THE NEEDS OF FOOD-INSECURE STUDENTS AT PUBLIC INSTITUTIONS OF HIGHER EDUCATION**. I think it is crucial for this bill to be passed to address the concerns of every food-insecure student at UConn. As a commuter student at a regional campus, I especially want to stress how prevalent this issue is at regional campuses.

Food insecurity is no stranger to the University of Connecticut. In a 2019 survey conducted by the University of Connecticut Board of Trustees to assess food insecurity across UConn campuses, UConn Waterbury ranks as the second most affected campus by food insecurity, behind UConn Stamford. In a later survey conducted in 2020, 38% of respondents at UConn reported being food insecure. Given that a wide range of UConn campuses are being affected, these statistics are extremely concerning, and the rate of food insecurity at regional campuses is especially alarming. Additionally, racial minority students are more affected by food insecurity than white students which raises further concerns.

I strongly favor mandating UConn to provide a survey to assess the status of food insecurity on campus and take necessary actions to address this issue across campuses. As the representative of the UConn Waterbury student body, I have heard many students express their personal concerns with food insecurity. I especially want to highlight the struggle of food insecurity at regional campuses, where commuting interferes with students' ability to eat while they are at school because they do not have time to prepare or purchase food prior to coming on campus, and many students do not have access to dining options. This ultimately forces students to be without food for long hours, affecting their physical and mental health.

The issue of food insecurity is extremely urgent— hunger affects education by impairing students' ability to focus and perform in school and can limit their later ability to be successful in their academic journey. The provisions of this bill are necessary for this problem to be legally addressed and it is imperative that this bill be reported favorably in order to lead to necessary change. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

X Asija Qyteza

Asija Qyteza
Waterbury Associated Student Government President